**Recommendation to the UN General Assembly for an Open Ended Mandate of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF)**

The Internet is here to stay.  The Internet Governance Forum 2014, with over 3300 people gathered in Istanbul and many more participating remotely, demonstrated the eagerness there is to connect across continents and discuss the Internet's many governance challenges and opportunities for economic growth and societal benefits. In response to broad multi-stakeholder support for continuing and strengthening the IGF, many participants have agreed on the need for a more stable mandate.  We believe an open-ended mandate would facilitate the strengthening of IGF procedures, enable participants to secure long-term funding for projects, and support the IGF Trust Fund.

In 2005, the World Summit for the Information Society asked the UN Secretary-General in the Tunis Agenda, to convene a meeting for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue—called the Internet Governance Forum (IGF).

The mandate of the Forum was to discuss public policy issues relating to key elements of Internet governance, such as those enumerated in the Tunis Agenda, in order to foster the sustainability, robustness, security, stability and development of the Internet for all. The Forum was not to replace existing arrangements, mechanisms, institutions or organizations. It was intended to constitute a neutral, non-duplicative and non-binding process, and have no involvement in day-to-day or technical operations of the Internet.

The Tunis Agenda also asked the UN Secretary-General “to examine the desirability of the continuation of the Forum, in formal consultation with Forum participants, within five years of its creation, and to make recommendations to the UN Membership in this regard”. At its sixty-fifth session, the General Assembly decided to extend the mandate of the IGF, underlining the need to improve the IGF “with a view to linking it to the broader dialogue on global Internet governance”[1].

In his note on the continuation of the Forum in 2010, the UN Secretary General confirmed that many participants considered it to be “unique and valuable” and should be preserved. It is a place where governments, civil society, the private sector, the UN and international organizations build a common understanding of the Internet’s great potential.

The Secretary-General recommended

(a) That the mandate of the Internet Governance Forum be extended for a further five years;

(b) That the desirability of continuation be considered again by Member

States within the context of a 10-year review of implementation of the outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society in 2015[2];

The Forum is indeed a valuable part of the international dialogue on Internet issues and is worth preserving.  However, the revolving five-year mandate is a barrier to long range planning and investment.  Many voices have called for the strengthening of the IGF, but a longer planning horizon is necessary to meet the needs of the multi-stakeholder community.  While more work needs to be done, some ~~i~~nitiatives to strengthen the IGF are already taking place:

·       To address the need for sustainable funding, the Internet Governance Forum Support Association ([http://www.igfsa.org/)](http://www.igfsa.org/%29) was formed at IGF 2014.  The goal of this non-profit is to promote sustainable funding for the IGF.

·       A comprehensive report on the successes of this Forum will be published following the 2014 conference in Istanbul.

·       More than 30 regional and national IGF initiatives have developed in all continents, enabling new forms of open and inclusive participation in Internet governance.

·       Dynamic coalitions have emerged and produced substantive work on complex issues.  These inter-sessional initiatives need to be taken to the next level of maturity.

Many of these collaborative community-designed initiatives are in danger of sunsetting, because of uncertainty in funding. This is why we are asking that the mandate be extended immediately, so that we do not lose momentum.

In order to allow the IGF to reach its full potential as a forum for all stakeholders in Internet Governance, we, the undersigned participants in the 2014 IGF, recommend an open-ended extension of the IGF’s mandate as soon as possible.

This letter will remain open for signature until November 1, 2014.

[1] <http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs2/tunis/off/6rev1.html>

[2] General Assembly, Sixty-fifth session, Item 17 of the preliminary list\*, Information and communications technologies for development, Economic and Social Council, Substantive session of 2010 New York, 28 June-23 July 2010, Agenda item 13 (b)\*\*